

## Numbers Matter: Post-2014 Afghan National Security Force End Strength

by

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## **Abstract**

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## **Numbers Matter: Post-2014 Afghan National Security Force End Strength**

Afghanistan's future looks ever more unpredictable as international forces now in the country moved toward a planned drawdown in 2014...This history suggests that the Taliban's expectations of taking Kabul by force and returning to rule over Afghanistan are unlikely to be realized, at least *as long as the international community chooses to support the existing Afghan government.* [italics added]

—Thomas Barfield<sup>1</sup>

As the United States and its international allies continue to withdraw the majority of their forces from Afghanistan and transition the lead for security to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), one of the remaining challenges is determining the final end strength of the Afghan National Forces (ANSF). History demonstrates that a nation fighting a counterinsurgency (COIN) must have a sufficiently large security force to defeat the insurgent threat. The post-2014 ANSF strength of 228,500 proposed by the U.S. and its allies is not sufficient to provide Afghanistan with a legitimate chance for success. This paper will explore the absolute minimum required number of ANSF post-2014.

It is critical that the international community gets the sizing of the ANSF right. On September 11, 2001, al Qaeda executed the most deadly attacks on U.S. soil in our history. Nearly 3,000 innocents from more than 90 countries lost their lives on that fateful day.<sup>2</sup> Planning for the 9/11 attacks originated from Afghanistan, which at the time was a major safe haven for terrorists. Over the past decade, the U.S. and its international allies reduced that safe haven at great cost in blood and national treasure. The world owes it to their people to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a launching pad for terrorists to attack our nations.

Although there are a multitude of components worthy of study in our long-term strategy for Afghanistan, this paper will focus primarily on exploring an adequate size of the ANSF post-2014. The ANSF are the most critical means that support the strategy. If they are unable to provide security for Afghanistan once the coalition withdraws, then the rest of the strategy will not succeed.

The paper will acknowledge briefly several other factors weighing on the long-term strategy for Afghanistan. Among these are: ANSF internal challenges, limited institutional capacity coupled with corruption within the Afghan government, and insurgent safe havens in Pakistan. While acknowledging these factors and making a few recommendations, this paper will return to its primary purpose of determining the minimum necessary end-strength numbers to ensure a legitimate chance for success. To paraphrase the famous words attributed to Joseph Stalin, quantity has a quality all its own.<sup>3</sup>

### The Long-Term Strategy in Afghanistan

Prior to discussing the ANSF force levels post-2014, it is important both to understand the long-term strategy for Afghanistan and to agree on the criteria against which we will measure that strategy. For a strategy to be successful it must be feasible, acceptable, and suitable. Dr. Steven Metz provides an excellent definition of these terms in his article, *Operational Effectiveness and Strategic Success in Counterinsurgency*: “Feasibility means that there must be adequate resources to implement the strategy. Acceptability means that the “stakeholders” of the strategy have to buy in. Suitability means that the strategy had to have a reasonable chance of attaining the desired political objectives.”<sup>4</sup> With these criteria in mind, we now turn to the strategy itself. What are the ends, ways, and means the international community

proposes to achieve success in Afghanistan? We begin with the most recent manifestation of the strategy – the Strategic Partnership Agreement.

On May 2, 2012 President Obama and President Hamid Karzai, the President of GIRoA, signed an *Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement* (SPA) in Kabul, Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> Through the SPA, the goal of the U.S. is to “cement an enduring partnership with Afghanistan that strengthens Afghan sovereignty, stability and prosperity, and that contributes to our shared goal of defeating Al Qaeda and its extremist affiliates.”<sup>6</sup> Additionally, this document designates Afghanistan as a “Major Non-NATO Ally” and agrees to fund the “training, equipping, advising, and sustaining” of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) post-2014 to allow Afghanistan to counter its internal and external threats.<sup>7</sup>

Senior civilian and military leaders in the U.S. have provided the strategic end state for Afghanistan in several venues. In the 2010 U.S. *National Security Strategy*, President Obama listed the strategic aims (ends) in Afghanistan as follows: “In Afghanistan, we must deny al-Qaeda a safe haven, deny the Taliban the ability to overthrow the government, and strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan’s security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan’s future.”<sup>8</sup>

During his March 20, 2012 Congressional testimony to the House Armed Services Committee concerning the *Recent Developments in Afghanistan*, General John Allen, Commander, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A), restated the ends thusly: “Our mission is to keep the Taliban from overthrowing the government of Afghanistan and to provide the capacity for the Afghan National Security Forces to provide the security to

that government over the long-term. But it's also to deny Al Qaida safe havens in Afghanistan.”<sup>9</sup>

The stated ways for Afghanistan in the 2011 National Military Strategy are as follows:

Success requires the Joint Force to closely work with NATO, our coalition partners, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. We will continue to erode Taliban influence, work with the Afghan government to facilitate reintegration and reconciliation of former insurgents, continue to strengthen the capacity of Afghan security forces, and enable Pakistan to ultimately defeat al Qaida and its extremist allies.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note that the ANSF ability to provide security for Afghanistan is central to the success of the long-term strategy as stated both in the national security policy documents and by GEN Allen in his Congressional testimony.

In other words, the fundamental ways in which the U.S. and its international allies hope to achieve their strategic ends are by the ANSF securing GIRoA and its people once the majority of ISAF troops have transitioned out of the country. However, for these ways to be effective, the ANSF must have the capacity and capability (the means) to accomplish the task. During his Congressional Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 22, 2012, GEN Allen describes the desired capability of the post-2014 ANSF:

The nature of the force that we envisage now will be a force that will be primarily capable of conducting counterinsurgency capabilities, to continue to deal with what we're calling operationally significant insurgent capabilities...The expected force will ultimately be a force that has sufficient policing capacity to provide protection to the population and an army and an Air Force that have the capacity to move sufficiently quickly to the point of requirement, either back up the police as necessary or to conduct counterinsurgency operations.<sup>11</sup>

Although there are other allocated diplomatic and economic resources, it is clear the primary means envisioned for the long-term strategy in Afghanistan are the Afghan

National Security Forces. Since success for Afghanistan is contingent primarily on the capability of the ANSF, it is useful to highlight their current strength and composition.

The ANSF consists of the Afghan National Army (ANA), the Afghan National Police (ANP), and the Afghan Air Force (AAF).<sup>12</sup> The Afghan Ministry of Defense (MOD) provides oversight for the ANA and the AAF.<sup>13</sup> The ANA is further comprised of six corps (U.S. division equivalents), Special Operations Forces, and the Capital Division located in Kabul.<sup>14</sup> The AAF will have the primary mission of airlift and casualty evacuation, and will have a limited capability to conduct rotary and fixed wing light air support.<sup>15</sup> The ANP, under the direction of the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI), consists of the Afghan Uniform police (AUP), the Afghan Border Police (ABP), and the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP).<sup>16</sup>

Two other Afghan security organizations, which did not factor into the original force structure, are the Afghan Local Police (ALP) and the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF). The Afghan MOI provides oversight for both of these organizations under the current GIRoA structure.<sup>17</sup> ALP are the product of the Village Stability Operations (VSO) program, a U.S. led initiative wherein U.S. Special Forces organize individuals, who are hand-picked by Afghan elders, into “armed neighborhood watch” groups in selected rural villages that support the program.<sup>18</sup> The Afghan MOI’s goal is to build 30,000 ALP by 2014.<sup>19</sup>

APPF originated August 17, 2010, when President Karzai issued Presidential Decree Number 62 disbanding private security contractor forces and mandating that ANSF assume responsibility for these security functions.<sup>20</sup> The ISAF created the Afghan Public Protection Force to meet President Karzai’s directive.<sup>21</sup> The APPF is

programmed to grow to 30,000 by March 2013.<sup>22</sup> Neither the ALP nor the APPF analysis was included in this paper. However, it is clear the costs for each would be above and beyond the amounts necessary to fund the ANA and ANP.

After considerable debate among senior leaders in the U.S., an agreement was reached that the surge level end strength through 2015 for the ANA and ANP would be 195,000 and 157,000 respectively.<sup>23</sup> As of December 2012, the ANSF have reached their targeted recruiting levels of 352,000 total ANSF.<sup>24</sup> Naturally, a security force of this size comes at considerable cost.

Funding to support and sustain the ANSF, post-2014, is a major concern for the U.S., Afghanistan, and the international coalition. To put it bluntly, the Afghan government will be unable to sustain the ANSF for the foreseeable future without considerable financial support from the U.S. and its international allies. During the period leading up to the NATO Summit and during the event itself on May 20 - 21, 2012, international donors considered their long-term financial commitment to the ANSF. Ultimately, the parties agreed to decrease the force levels of the ANSF from the currently funded 352,000 to 228,500 by 2017.<sup>25</sup> Although this figure will be subject to constant review, it is noteworthy that the donors agreed to this lower number based almost exclusively on cost, and not an analysis of actual security requirements. Ultimately a force of 228,500 at \$4.1 billion per year was determined to be palatable; whereas, the cost for sustaining the force at 352,000 (an estimated \$6 billion per year) was not.<sup>26</sup>

The NATO Summit agreed the U.S. would provide \$2.3 of the \$4.1 billion each year while seeking donor support for \$1.3 billion a year.<sup>27</sup> The Afghans will provide the

remaining \$500 million a year, with that number rising steadily until 2024 when they are expected to fund all of their security needs.<sup>28</sup>

To this point we have established that senior leaders across the globe are in general agreement on the ends and ways in the strategy, but notwithstanding the outcomes of the NATO Summit, there is major disagreement on the means. Specifically, the funding levels for the ANSF post-2014 are a major source of friction. Political leaders in the U.S. are publicly debating the minimum size of the ANSF to maintain security in what has been, and by many forecasts will still be, a volatile environment post-2014. Prior to the NATO Summit, Congress addressed the force levels of the ANSF with the Department of Defense (DoD) during two major Congressional Testimonies in March 2012.

During the first Congressional testimony to the House Armed Services Committee on the *Recent Developments in Afghanistan* on March 20, 2012, Representative Susan Davis asked Dr. James Miller, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, if “230,000” is the number that the ANSF is being downsized to post-2014.<sup>29</sup> Dr. Miller responded, “We expect at some point in time, and that time has not been determined... it will make sense to reduce that...to a long- term sustainable level. But the point of time that makes sense will depend fundamentally on the conditions on the ground.”<sup>30</sup>

The dialogue continued during the second Congressional testimony on March 22, 2012, when Dr. Miller and GEN Allen testified during the Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing on the *Situation in Afghanistan*. If one watched the live testimony, it

was clear that there was tension throughout the session. In his opening statement, Senator Carl Levin, Chairman of the committee, made an impassioned statement:

Now, given the importance of having capable Afghan national security forces take over the security lead throughout Afghanistan, I was surprised and I was concerned about news accounts of a U.S. proposal to reduce the size of the Afghan forces by a third after 2014 – apparently based on questions of affordability of sustaining a larger Afghan force...It may be penny wise but it would be pound foolish to put at risk the hard-fought gains that we, our coalition partners and the Afghans have achieved rather than support an Afghan security force that is right-sized to provide security to the Afghan people and to prevent a Taliban return to power.<sup>31</sup>

Discussions regarding the ANSF force levels continued to dominate much of this Congressional session. Later in the testimony, Senator Levin asked GEN Allen to comment on these numbers, and GEN Allen's final response ended with, "...But at this juncture, again based on the studies, based on the intelligence scenarios on which we ran the – the analysis, at this point 231,000 to 236,000 looks about the right number in combination of army and police capabilities."<sup>32</sup>

Senator John McCain took the floor following this response and made no effort to hide his skepticism with the following comment: "I sure would be interested in seeing those studies that brang (ph) you down to 231,000 or 236,000. General, because then they would contradict every study that's been done in the past. So they – either the past studies were flawed and – and inaccurate or the present study is flawed and inaccurate."<sup>33</sup>

During the same testimony on March 22, 2012, Senator Lindsey Graham continued to press this issue when he asked GEN Allen the following: "Now, as to the Army. General, ...What's the difference in cost between 230,000 and 330,000 a year to maintain Afghan Soldiers? An Army of 330,000 versus 230,000? Is it \$1 billion, \$2



billion, \$3 billion? Do we know the difference?”<sup>34</sup> GEN Allen responded, “It’s between \$2 billion and \$3 billion, sir.”<sup>35</sup>

Based on these testimonies, it is clear that the debate over the minimum size of the ANSF post-2014 will more than likely continue to be an issue, especially as the U.S. gets closer to withdrawing the majority of its forces from Afghanistan. The question then is, what is the appropriate number of ANSF?

### Assessing the Risk in the Long-Term Strategy

In order to approximate an adequate force level for the ANSF, it is necessary to determine what will be needed for them to secure GIRoA and the people. The subsequent analysis will provide evidence supporting 352,000 ANSF as the absolute minimum number required for GIRoA to have a legitimate chance for success. The evidence consists of both a mathematical analysis and an assessment of ANSF performance to date.

The primary metric this paper uses to measure the adequacy of projected ANSF force levels post-2014 will be a mathematical comparison of ratios of security forces to the number of inhabitants in the various geographical areas in Afghanistan. This metric is based both on several studies of COIN campaigns by different organizations over recent years, and on current and emerging U.S. doctrine.

U.S. Army Field Manual, *FM 3-24, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, the U.S. Army’s capstone publication on counterinsurgency (COIN), states that although specific force ratios are not a guarantee for victory for either the insurgent or counterinsurgent, “planners assumed that combatants required a 10 or 15 to 1 advantage over insurgents to win. However, no predetermined, fixed ratio of friendly troops to enemy combatants ensures success in COIN. The conditions of the operational environment and the

approaches insurgents use vary too widely.”<sup>36</sup> The field manual continues by suggesting a better method: “A better force requirement gauge is troop density, the ratio of security forces (including the host nation’s military and police forces as well as foreign counterinsurgents) to inhabitants.”<sup>37</sup> FM 3-24 defines the recommended security force ratio to the number of inhabitants as follows:

Most density recommendations fall within a range of 20 to 25 counterinsurgents for every 1,000 residents in an AO (area of operation). Twenty counterinsurgents per 1,000 residents is often considered the minimum troop density required for effective COIN operations; however, as with any fixed ratio, such calculations remain very dependent upon the situation.<sup>38</sup>

After referencing several historical reports that studied the application of various force ratios to historical successful and unsuccessful COIN campaigns, the U.S. Counterinsurgency Center is recommending the following change to the next edition of FM 3-24:

Rather force levels should be based on the number of inhabitants in each area of operations. The appropriate force requirement gauge is troop density-the ratio of security forces (including host nation military and police) as well as coalition forces to inhabitants. A ratio of greater than 40 counterinsurgents to 1,000 inhabitants is considered the necessary troop density for effective counterinsurgency operations; however, as with any fixed ratio, such calculations remain very dependent upon the situation.<sup>39</sup>

It is important to highlight that the recommended force ratios are based on the number of security forces compared to the number of inhabitants in a discreet area of operation rather than an entire country. The Counterinsurgency Center is recommending keeping this component in the next edition of FM 3-24.

While current and emerging U.S. Army doctrine includes force ratios as a key metric, it is fair to concede that there is considerable debate among experts regarding the extent to which force levels contribute in a meaningful, measurable way to a

successful COIN fight. In the context of this debate, it is useful to discuss the report that had the greatest impact on shaping the Counterinsurgency Center's recommendation.

In 2010, the Department of Defense requested that the Institute for Defense Studies (IDA) provide the leadership in DoD with "a rough idea of the capabilities and limitations of the programmed ground force structure to conduct stability operations in a broad range of countries."<sup>40</sup> This study directly supported the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), even though the original intent of the study was not to provide operational planning factors but rather to evaluate force planning as part of the QDR.<sup>41</sup>

The report's key findings are summarized as follows:

In 2006 the U.S. Army and Marine Corps developed a joint doctrinal field manual, FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency that provides important guidance on force sizing for COIN operations. The manual suggests figures for "force densities" (troops per 1,000 inhabitants in the area of operations) required for effective operations--for example, 20 troops per 1,000 is cited as a minimum requirement. That figure has become a widely referenced rule of thumb. This study sheds light on the evidence supporting that guidance, confirming the 20 troops per 1,000 figure as a minimum. However, the field manual also implicitly suggests 25 troops per 1,000 as the upper end of a range—a figure not confirmed by this study. We found that force densities of 40-50 troops per 1,000 may be required for high confidence of success.<sup>42</sup>

A study that published an opposing set of findings was conducted at the Harvard Kennedy School in 2011. The study analyzed 171 counterinsurgency campaigns since World War I and determined that the current force ratio requiring 20 troops per 1,000 inhabitants "has no discernible empirical support".<sup>43</sup> However, it does agree with the IDA study that, "troops-per-inhabitant is the best way to measure force size in most cases."<sup>44</sup> The report concludes with the following: "Examining the relationship between manpower and success supports the argument...that the number of troops is less important than the manner and the context in which they are employed."<sup>45</sup> The

conclusion that force levels in and of themselves do not guarantee victory is valid; however, history clearly shows that they are a necessary means to establish security. Again, quantity has a quality all its own.

Steve Goode, a Presidential Management Fellow working Afghanistan issues in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, provides important insights on this debate:

That said, however, force levels do matter, and history can provide a guideline for force requirements in counterinsurgency. The analysis...shows that there are three major drivers of military requirements. First, as previous studies have argued and current doctrine emphasizes, security forces have to be sized relative to the population. Second, the more intense the insurgency, the more forces are required to reverse increasing insurgent violence. Third, the larger the percentage of personnel that are drawn from the host nation, the fewer forces will be needed overall.<sup>46</sup>

History provides further evidence in support of current and emerging U.S. doctrine. During the Malayan Emergency from 1948 to 1960, the British fought a successful counterinsurgency where they “generated a force level” (including indigenous security forces) of 20 troops per one thousand inhabitants.<sup>47</sup> In Northern Ireland the British government conducted operations over a twenty-five year period with a force ratio of approximately 20 security force personnel per one thousand of the population, which eventually led to a satisfactory political settlement.<sup>48</sup>

During OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, the U.S. had an initial force level of 7.26 troops per one thousand of the population (in Baghdad the ratio was higher at 9.03 to 1,000) from 2003 to 2005 (pre-surge).<sup>49</sup> These numbers do not include the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) since the study did not assess them as operationally capable until beginning in February 2005.<sup>50</sup> However, during the summer of 2007, the U.S. committed a “surge” of 30,000 additional troops that substantially increased the force

ratio of security force personnel to population to almost 20 per 1,000 (includes ISF).<sup>51</sup>

The commitment of these troops was credited as being a major contributing factor that led to the successful turning point for the U.S. in the war.

Conversely, in 2007, the force ratio in Afghanistan was significantly lower than in Iraq at the time with 5 security force personnel per 1,000 population.<sup>52</sup> A study by the Combat Studies Institute in 2006 revealed, “From the sampling of the largest municipal police departments in the United States, police density at the municipal level averages 4.1 officers per 1,000 of the population...”<sup>53</sup> This section of the report concludes, “...it is apparent that the police density, even for the largest municipal police departments, is far smaller than the densities of the sampling of military forces employed in successful contingency operations.”<sup>54</sup> To put this in perspective, up until 2010, the force level in Afghanistan was only slightly larger than normal police levels in the U.S., a nation that is not experiencing an insurgency threatening to topple its government. It became clear that additional forces were needed to turn the tide in favor of the U.S. and its international allies.

Based on his initial assessment after assuming command of ISAF and USFOR-A, General Stanley McChrystal requested 40,000 more troops in September 2009, of which President Obama approved 30,000.<sup>55</sup> At the peak of the surge, it is estimated that the force ratio was approximately 15 security force personnel (ISAF and ANSF) per 1,000 Afghan civilians in December 2010.<sup>56</sup> As in Iraq, the Afghan troop surge had measurably positive effects.

In December 2012, DoD published its semi-annual report to Congress, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*.<sup>57</sup> DoD’s assessment is as

follows: “The areas of the country influenced by the insurgents and the ability of the insurgents to attack the population have been significantly diminished. Although challenges remain and progress in Afghanistan has been uneven in many areas, the security gains resulting from the surge are clear.”<sup>58</sup>

Using the force ratios, then, from current and emerging U.S. doctrine, as well as historical studies, a methodology can be developed to compare mathematically the unconstrained required ANSF force levels against the proposed post-2014 level of 228,500, as well as the current number of 352,000. The first step in this methodology is defining the significant areas of operation in Afghanistan.

There are several current population estimates for Afghanistan ranging between 25 – 30 million people in 2012. The Central Statistics Office Afghanistan (CSO), which is the official Afghanistan Government repository for official statistics, estimates the 2012 population to be around 25,500,100 people.<sup>59</sup> This paper uses the CSO’s data as the baseline when discussing population numbers since their database provides an in depth demographic breakdown by province and major city in the country.

Both FM 3-24 and the IDA report emphasize that the force level metric must be applied to a specific area of operations rather than the entire country. This paper will analyze four areas of operation coinciding with the geographical regions of the country: east, south, north, and west.

Afghanistan is divided into thirty four political provinces.<sup>60</sup> There are fifteen provinces located in the east with a population of 11,598,200.<sup>61</sup> The South consists of six provinces with a population of 3,248,500.<sup>62</sup> Nine provinces comprise the north with a

population of 7,261,900.<sup>63</sup> Finally, four provinces are located in the west with a population of 3,391,500.<sup>64</sup>

Applying the force ratio metrics outlined in the current version of FM 3-24 of 20 security force personnel to 1,000 inhabitants, and the recommended changes to the next revision of FM 3-24 of 40 security force personnel to 1,000 inhabitants, one can estimate the required number of Afghan security forces needed to secure the population in each of the four major geographical areas in the country. The analysis incorporated both force ratios since the new version of FM 3-24 has not been approved with the Counterinsurgency Center's recommendation. This analysis considered a mathematical model that applied both force ratios based not only on population levels, but also the relative threats to security in each of the four regions. It weighted each region according to historical and projected post-2014 enemy insurgent threats. The model compared the unconstrained required ANSF force levels with both the constrained current ANSF force level of 352,000 and the projected post-2017 level of 228,500.

There are admittedly two limitations with this model, and we should address them briefly. Firstly, one might argue that the four chosen geographical areas of operation are too large and broad to precisely portray the exact disposition of ANSF. For example, some of the rural and sparsely populated areas may require little to no ANSF presence based on current threat conditions. While this may be accurate in a gross sense, it is also true that there will be a requirement for at least some level of ANSF within each of the provinces to respond to security issues that may arise in the future. Otherwise, the population of these provinces will be vulnerable to a favored Taliban tactic - reestablishing its version of law and order within remote villages.<sup>65</sup>

The second limitation with the model arises from the fact that the Afghan Air Force, Afghan Local Police, and Afghan Public Protection Force numbers were not included in this analysis. While it is clear these forces represent an important part of the current security structure in Afghanistan, it is not clear what either the final disposition or the financial sustainment of these organizations will look like post-2014. Until the U.S. and its allies determine the funding levels for these organizations after the final transition for security in 2014, any analysis would be pure speculation.

As already discussed, the model allocates the ANSF post-2014 based not only on population, but also on the relative threats in each of the four regions. Before discussing the results from the model, it is necessary to briefly summarize the current and projected enemy threats in Afghanistan.

The greatest threats currently in Afghanistan are in the eastern and southern parts of the country. For example, from April to September 2012, the East and South experienced more than 90% of the Enemy Initiated Attacks (EIA).<sup>66</sup> The northern and western regions have a historically significantly lower percentage of threats to their security - just 8% of the total for Afghanistan.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, logic suggests that GIRoA will continue its current practice of allocating the majority of the ANSF in the East and in the South.

Currently, the Taliban comprises more than 80% of the number of insurgent fighters in Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup> As Thomas Barfield points out in his book, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, "The largest and most intense insurgency was centered in Qandahar and Helmand Provinces, and led by Mullah Omar's Taliban."<sup>69</sup> It is a fair assumption, backed up by recent history, that the Taliban will likely attempt to regain



control of south since this represents both their origin and greatest level of support from the population. Therefore, the southern part of the country will need a significant percentage of ANSF to deter the continual Taliban threat.

The East will also need a relatively high percentage of ANSF due to the threat of the Haqqani network. Technically, the Haqqani network is subordinate to the Taliban, as Haqqani's leader Sirajuddin Haqqani pledges his loyalty to Mullah Omar.<sup>70</sup> However, as Jeffrey Dressler, Senior Research Analyst at the Institute for the Study of War, points out in, *The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat*:

The Haqqani network represents a strategic threat to the enduring stability of the Afghan State and U.S. national security interests in the region. The Haqqanis are currently Afghanistan's most capable and potent insurgent group, and they continue to maintain close operational and strategic ties with al Qaeda and their affiliates. These ties will likely deepen in the future.<sup>71</sup>

The Haqqani network's base of operations in Afghanistan is located in the eastern provinces of Khost, Paktiya, and Paktika, and one of their major strategic goals is to execute frequent spectacular attacks into Kabul.<sup>72</sup>

Applying this threat assessment to the model, a percentage of ANSF is assigned to each of the four geographical AOs. These percentages are listed in column 3, % *Allocation by Threat*, in Tables 1 and 2. It should be noted that the percentages were assigned by the author based on the aforementioned assessment of the post-2014 threat in each of the four geographical regions.

The eastern and southern AOs fairly illustrate the results for the model. Because of the Haqqani threat and its large population, the East is allocated 46% of the ANSF. Table 1 shows that unconstrained, the East requires 463,928 ANSF at a force ratio of 40:1,000 and 231,964 at a force ratio of 20:1,000. However, when the ANSF is

constrained at the current level of 352,000, the East is only allocated 161,920 as depicted in column 6, *ANSF Distribution Post-2014 Constrained at 352,000*. Therefore, they are short 302,008 and 70,044 at force ratios of 40:1,000 and 20:1,000 ANSF to inhabitants, respectively.

Recent history shows that the greatest threat to the sovereignty of Afghanistan is the Taliban's desire to take back the south. Therefore, 37% of the ANSF were allocated to the South in this model to provide sufficient security forces to prevent the Taliban from regaining control. From the results in Table 1, the South requires 129,940 and 64,970 ANSF at force ratios of 40:1,000 and 20:1,000 ANSF to inhabitants, respectively. When the ANSF is constrained at the current level of 352,000, the South is allocated 130,240 as depicted in column 6, *ANSF Distribution Post-2014 Constrained at 352,000*. Note that this gives them a slight surplus of 300 at the Counterinsurgency Center's recommended force ratio of 40 security force personnel to 1,000 inhabitants and a larger surplus of 65,270 at a lower force ratio of 20 security force personnel to 1,000 inhabitants. The results for the North and West are also depicted in Table 1 and each shows a continuation of the short fall pattern seen in the East.

Table 1. Force Level Analysis with 352,000 ANSF based on Projected Threat

Geographical Region	Total Population	% Allocation by Threat Assessment	ANSF Required 40:1,000 Unconstrained	ANSF Required 20:1,000 Unconstrained	ANSF Distribution Post-2014 Constrained at 352,000	Shortfall 40:1,000	Shortfall 20:1,000
East	11,598,200	46%	463,928	231,964	161,920	302,008	70,044
South	3,248,500	37%	129,940	64,970	130,240	-300	-65,270
North	7,261,900	12%	290,476	145,238	42,240	248,236	102,998
West	3,391,500	5%	135,660	67,830	17,600	118,060	50,230
<b>TOTAL</b>	25,500,100	100%	1,020,004	510,002	352,000	668,004	158,002

Using the same methodology as in Table 1, the numbers in Table 2 illustrate the results of a projected post-2014 force level of 228,500 ANSF. The East is short

358,818 and 126,854 at force ratios of 40:1,000 and 20:1,000 ANSF to inhabitants, respectively. The South is short 45,395 at the recommended force ratio of 40 security force personnel to 1,000 inhabitants, but retains a surplus of 19,575 at the lower force ratio (higher risk) of 20 security force personnel to 1,000 inhabitants. The results for the North and West are also shown in Table 2, and again the shortfalls are significant.

Table 2. Force Level Analysis with 228,000 ANSF based on Projected Threat

<b>Geographical Region</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>% Allocation by Threat Assessment</b>	<b>ANSF Required 40:1,000 Unconstrained</b>	<b>ANSF Required 20:1,000 Unconstrained</b>	<b>ANSF Distribution Post-2014 Constrained at 228,500</b>	<b>Shortfall 40:1,000</b>	<b>Shortfall 20:1,000</b>
<b>East</b>	11,598,200	46%	463,928	231,964	105,110	358,818	126,854
<b>South</b>	3,248,500	37%	129,940	64,970	84,545	45,395	-19,575
<b>North</b>	7,261,900	12%	290,476	145,238	27,420	263,056	117,818
<b>West</b>	3,391,500	5%	135,660	67,830	11,425	124,235	56,405
<b>TOTAL</b>	25,500,100	100%	1,020,004	510,002	228,500	791,504	281,502

The results of the analysis are telling. The outlook is stark when the allocation of ANSF is reduced to the post-2014 level of 228,500. Specifically, the shortfalls are significantly increased in the East, North, and West at both force ratios. Additionally, at the recommended force ratio of 40 security force personnel to 1,000 inhabitants, the South incurs a shortfall of more than 45,000. Overall, the decreased allocation of ANSF from its current strength to projected post-2014 levels results in 123,500 fewer security force personnel. It also reduces the force ratio to approximately 9 security force personnel per 1,000 Afghan civilians, a figure supported neither by history or doctrine. With the planned 35% drop in the number ANSF, the long-term strategy incurs very high risk.

On the other hand, even though mathematically the results in the model reveal an overall shortfall of ANSF, GIRoA can still effectively conduct counterinsurgency operations with 352,000 ANSF. This number gives GIRoA a force ratio of

approximately 14 security force personnel per 1,000 Afghan civilians using today's population figures. This is comparable to the 15 security force personnel to 1,000 Afghan civilians force ratio at the height of 2010 surge, where there was measurable success. Moreover, the results of the model demonstrate a viable scenario where there is sufficient ANSF to secure the South, if GIRoA chooses to weight their effort in this critical region. Admittedly, there is still a significant shortfall in the East, but with international assistance GIRoA can mitigate this risk, a point that will be discussed later in the paper. With the historically reduced enemy activity in the North and West, the risk stemming from a smaller number of ANSF in these regions is low.

Adding to the analysis, the latest DoD assessment supports 352,000 ANSF as the minimum number for securing Afghanistan. Their December 2012 semi-annual report to Congress reported that the ANSF have made "substantial progress" during the reporting period and are "gradually building a force that will assume full responsibility for security operations throughout Afghanistan by the end of 2014."<sup>73</sup> The report also emphasizes that about 76% of the Afghan population is residing in areas where the ANSF are in the process for taking the lead for security in those areas.<sup>74</sup> This latest assessment also highlights the undisputable gains of the ANSF:

The ANSF is now conducting the vast majority of operations. Although many of these operations are routine patrols, the ANSF are now (as of September) unilaterally conducting approximately 80 percent of total reported operations and are leading roughly 85 percent of total operations. Additionally, the ANSF have started to expand security independently in areas where ISAF does not already have an established presence, demonstrating initiative and increased capability. ISAF carries out only 10 percent of total reported operations unilaterally and is in the lead for only 15 percent of operations.<sup>75</sup>

Most importantly, the Afghan population has trust and confidence in their ANSF. One prominent Afghan newspaper, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, captures the sentiment

of the people: “There is no doubt that Afghan army has appeared as the most trustable force for the people of Afghanistan... ANSF serves as the biggest hope of Afghan people in regards of securing their lives especially at times when the international troops are on their way home.”<sup>76</sup> Clearly, the current 352,000 ANSF force level is not only effectively providing security for Afghanistan, but also can continue to do so at these force levels post-2014.

As stated previously, the strategy in Afghanistan must be feasible, acceptable, and suitable. A careful assessment of the risk by measuring these three components against various factors impacting the strategy’s successful implementation is necessary.

The preceding analysis of the strategy reveals clearly that it is infeasible. Specifically, the proposed means of 228,500 ANSF (Table 2) that the international community is willing to fund, do not adequately support one of the stated ends in the President’s National Security Strategy, “...deny the Taliban the ability to overthrow the government...”<sup>77</sup> To underscore this point, several experts describe the essential role the ANSF have in securing Afghanistan.

Anthony Cordesman, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic & International Studies, advocates “sustaining the ANA development” and not “rushing the pace according to today’s unworkable schedule”.<sup>78</sup> Specifically, he argues that it is critical to keep the Afghan security forces focused in the key districts and cities to be effective.<sup>79</sup> In order to keep them effectively focused, there must be enough ANSF to provide security in the population centers. Moreover, there has to be an adequate level of ANSF to respond to security threats in the rural areas.

Dr. Seth Jones, Associate Director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at the RAND Corporation, further illustrates this point. Jones offers that one of the options the U.S. should pursue in Afghanistan is an “Afghan-Led Counterinsurgency”, in which the Afghans would ultimately take the lead for defeating the insurgents in Afghanistan with the “assistance and oversight” of the U.S.<sup>80</sup> He believes this approach could allow for success in Afghanistan.<sup>81</sup> The U.S. and its allies have essentially adopted this option as part of their long-term strategy. However, one of the risks that Jones highlights with this option is that with the withdrawal of U.S. forces, the ANSF could fail to degrade the Taliban insurgency.<sup>82</sup> To mitigate this risk and afford the overall strategy the best chance to succeed, there must be at least 352,000 ANSF remaining post-2014 to prevent the Taliban from re-establishing control of the country.

The major focus of this paper is examining whether the means (228,500 ANSF) support the ends in the long-term strategy for Afghanistan. Having addressed this feasibility question, it is important to remember that sufficient ANSF force levels do not in and of themselves guarantee success. There are several other factors that represent potentially significant risk. Therefore, it is important to discuss these factors and how they impact the acceptability and suitability of the strategy.

Recall that acceptability is defined as “the stakeholders in the strategy have to buy in.”<sup>83</sup> Although the strategy has been deemed nominally acceptable (read, affordable) in general to the U.S. and its international allies, the U.S. Congress still has not agreed to the proposed funding levels for the ANSF based primarily on the belief by some key members that the means do not adequately support the long-term strategic

aims. It remains to be seen whether brinksmanship will be an issue as the U.S. continues to withdraw the majority of its forces from Afghanistan, and as global fiscal challenges continue to suppress our nation's appetite for massive spending. Assuming, however, that funding for 228,500 is approved, one would have to label the strategy acceptable, at least fiscally.

Finally, it is critical to discuss the suitability question. Recall, that suitability characterizes the strategy as having a "reasonable chance of attaining the desired political objectives."<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, the strategy appears to be lacking here for several reasons. Firstly, the proposed primary means in the strategy, 228,500 ANSF, are grossly insufficient to support the political goals of the U.S causing the strategy to be significantly out of balance.

Secondly, the future challenges for the ANSF are numerous: attrition (dropped from rolls, killed in action, permanently disabled, captured, and non-combat deaths); poor leadership (especially in the Noncommissioned Officer Corps); sustainment; procurement; and enabler support (air transport and close air support, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), and medical).<sup>85</sup> Corruption, particularly within the Afghan Air Force (AAF), Afghan Border Police (ABP), and Afghan Uniform Police (AUP), is also a significant challenge to the legitimacy of the ANSF with the Afghan people.<sup>86</sup> All evidence suggests they will continue to struggle with these issues post-2014, reinforcing the notion that simply having sufficient ANSF force levels will not be enough for success.

Thirdly, a combination of limited institutional capacity (budget shortfalls, revenue generation, and financial management to name a few) and widespread corruption in the

Afghan government may hinder the strategy from succeeding in the long-term even if the ANSF can provide the necessary security for the country.<sup>87</sup> This has been an enduring problem in Afghanistan since 2001 with many experts believing this significantly reduces the chances for success.

Finally, insurgent safe havens in Pakistan pose very significant risk to the post-2014 strategy in Afghanistan.<sup>88</sup> Even at the current force level of 352,000, the ANSF are severely challenged in their ability to secure their borders. History teaches us that as long as insurgents operate freely from sanctuaries in neighboring countries, any nation will be challenged to achieve complete security. As Afghanistan struggles to secure its eastern border, the sanctuaries in Pakistan must be significantly reduced, especially in light of the withdrawal of U.S. and international allies, and a fiscally constrained ANSF force level.

#### Recommendations and Conclusion

Using the insights gained from assessing the risk in the current strategy, there are several recommendations that the U.S. and its international allies should consider as they continue to refine their strategy for a post-2014 Afghanistan. Firstly, and most importantly, the international community should continue to fund the ANSF at the current level of 352,000. Analysis of both doctrine and history shows that maintaining this bare minimum force level provides a legitimate chance for GIRoA to successfully provide security for its population, especially in critical areas such as the South.

Secondly, maintain a sufficient force from the U.S. and its international allies to mitigate the risks associated with the current ANSF challenges. For the next decade, the ANSF will require training, advising, and assisting (primarily with enablers) in order to defeat the security threats and allow the country to transition from COIN to stability.



The ANSF will require significant oversight and support to overcome these hurdles. Moreover, the U.S. could help GIRoA mitigate risks with the Haqqani network, primarily operating in the East, with a counter-terrorism force that targets high value terrorists within the region. The ability of the U.S. and its international allies to provide this support post-2014 will be critical in this security endeavor.

Thirdly, the U.S. and its allies will have to continue to work through the significant challenges posed by the sanctuaries in Pakistan, and the lack of human capacity coupled with rampant corruption in the Afghan government. Many of the specific solutions for these problem areas lie in the classified realm and are therefore beyond the scope of this paper.

Finally, because the methodology used in this paper to assess the adequacy of the ANSF force levels was performed at an unclassified level, and the four geographical areas were chosen for simplicity, a thorough, classified analysis should be conducted based on current and projected intelligence assessments using U.S. COIN doctrine to refine the results described in this paper. This subsequent analysis will be useful to identify where GIRoA can assume risk based on the final allocation of ANSF post-2014.

History shows us that defeating insurgencies is a lengthy process, with the post-World War II average hovering around 14 years.<sup>89</sup> If one argues that the clock for effectively defeating the insurgency in Afghanistan began when President Obama sent 30,000 “surge” forces into Afghanistan, it could be 2024 before we see a transition from COIN to stability.<sup>90</sup> But even this cautious estimate is dependent on the world committing sufficient resources. RAND published a study in 2010 based on examining

30 recent insurgencies, and one of their major findings is, “Poor beginnings do not necessarily lead to poor ends.”<sup>91</sup> Clearly, success is still possible in Afghanistan.

As this paper has argued, in order for Afghanistan to make this critical transition from COIN to stability, it must have sufficient security forces. While conceding that sufficient numbers are not by themselves any guarantee of success, we must recognize they are a necessary start point. Again, quantity has a quality all its own. Applying both U.S. COIN doctrine and the lessons of history, the analysis in this paper demonstrates that at the current funding level of 352,000 ANSF, GIRoA has a legitimate chance to provide security for their country. However, when the force levels are reduced to 228,500, GIRoA’s chances for success border on the laughable.

In the final analysis, the international community must consider the level of risk it is willing to assume in Afghanistan. If the risk, either of a Taliban return to power, or of Afghanistan once again becoming a Safe haven for terrorists is unacceptable, the U.S. and its allies should strongly consider increasing the funding of the post-2014 ANSF to at least current levels. If the current trend of moderate success in the campaign continues leading up to the final transition from ISAF to GIRoA, a force level of 352,000 ANSF would seem to be a prudent hedge against the extant risks.

The cost in today’s dollars to fund the ANSF at 352,000 is estimated at \$6 billion per year, around \$2 billion more than the cost of 228,500.<sup>92</sup> The fundamental question is whether the U.S. and its allies should commit the additional funds as added insurance to provide GIRoA the resources necessary to protect its population using its own security. This increase in funding while not insignificant is a veritable bargain compared to the \$86 billion dollars the U.S. is projected to spend in fiscal year 2013 alone.<sup>93</sup>

If the U.S. and its international allies carefully analyze the risks during their drawdown and transition of full security to the Afghan government, they will realize that the surest way to mitigate enemy threats is by funding appropriate ANSF force levels. To do less is to suggest that the blood and treasure that many nations have invested in Afghanistan since 2001 will have been in vain.

## Endnotes

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<sup>80</sup> Seth G. Jones, "Transitioning to Afghan-Led Counterinsurgency," Congressional Testimony to the U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Steps Needed for a Successful 2014 Transition in Afghanistan*, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., May 10, 2011, 7.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>83</sup> Metz, "Operational Effectiveness and Strategic Success in Counterinsurgency."

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan: United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghanistan National Security Forces* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, April 2012), 5.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan: United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghanistan National Security Forces* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, December 2012), 103.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>89</sup> Seth Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2008), xii.

<sup>90</sup> Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, 334-335.

<sup>91</sup> Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2010), 96.

<sup>92</sup> Katzmman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, 33.

<sup>93</sup> Stephen Daggett and Pat Towell, *FY2013 Defense Budget Request: Overview and Context* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, September 5, 2012), 3.